

## BAPTISM

By: Randy Baker

A lady who was a member of one of the local denominations in town was attending a gospel meeting at the local church of Christ. That night she heard a powerful sermon on the subject of baptism. She sought out her minister to question him on this vital subject. He assured her that sprinkling was scriptural. She was fairly convinced, except for the story of Philip and the Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40).

"There it says they both went down into the water," she insisted.

"But you must remember, sister," said the preacher, "that the scripture furthermore says it was a desert place. There could not have been enough water for immersion. It is likely that this happened: the Eunuch, having prepared well for the journey through the desert, had a large jug of water under the chariot seat. When he was convinced that he should be baptized, he simply brought forth the jug, and holding it up to Philip, said, 'see here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?'"

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed the woman, "and they both went down into the jug!"

The true mode of baptism has been and continues to be debated by some. The first known case of sprinkling was administered to Novatian in A.D. 251. It developed as an emergency action for the sick (J.W. Shepherd, *The Church The Falling Away and the Restoration*, p. 60) As the years passed by it became more accepted by various religious groups. However, as with any practice, it must be weighed in the balances of God's Word.

Biblical baptism is an immersion in water. The original word "baptize" is defined as to "dip" or "submerge" (Thayer, p.94). Sprinkling cannot qualify as baptism because it is not an immersion. The New Testament is very pointed on the mode of baptism. "**Buried** with him in baptism..." (Colossians 2:12). "Know ye not, that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are **buried** with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3,4). In sprinkling there is not a burial, neither is there a resurrection. Clearly baptism is a burial in water.

Several years ago Jacob Ditzler and J.S. Sweeney debated the scriptural mode of baptism. During the course of the debate, Ditzler showed that a secondary meaning of the word "baptize" was "to wash or sprinkle." He thus reasoned that sprinkling was a scriptural practice. Not to be outdone, Sweeney countered by showing that a secondary meaning of "saved" was "to be pickled," and a secondary meaning of believe was "to hold an opinion." This resulted in the following translation of Mark 16:16: "He that hath an opinion and is sprinkled shall be pickled." Sweeney then asked, "Is it our aim to see what we can make out of the Scriptures, or is it to find out what God has said?"

Have you been immersed (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)?